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Message Text

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45
ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 EB-11 DRC-01

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O R 251514Z APR 74
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9718
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
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AMEMBASSY LAGOS
V
DTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1556
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MASERU
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES
AMEMBASSY LUANDA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, SF
SUBJ: SOUTH AFRICA GENERAL ELECTION: NATS WIN, PROGS GAIN
AT UP'S EXPENSE

REF: PRETORIA 1747 AND 1750

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1. SUMMARY: SCORING RESOUNDING VICTORY, NATIONAL PARTY HAS

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BEEN RETURNED TO POWER WITH INCREASED MAJORITY IN SOUTH AFRICA'S GENERAL ELECTION. PROGRESSIVE PARTY HAS MADE UNEXPECTED GAINS AND UNITED PARTY HAS SUFFERED DISTINCT SETBACK. NATIONALISTS INCREASED NUMBER OF SEATS THEY HOLD IN HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY FROM 118 TO ABOUT 123 (RESULTS ARE NOTYET FINAL IN A FEW CONSTITUENCIES). MOST DRAMATIC ASPECT OF ELECTION WAS PROGRESSIVES' VICTORIES IN SIX CONSTITUENCIES, THREE MORE THAN MOST POLITICAL ANALYSTS HAD EXPECTED AND FIVE MORE THAN THE ONE VICTORY THEY WON IN 1961, 1966 AND 1970. NATIONALIST AND PROG GAINS WERE AT EXPENSE OF UNITED PARTY, WHICH SAW ITS SEATS IN PARLIAMENT DECREASE FROM 47 TO ABOUT 40. (TWO SEATS, UNFILLED AFTER DEATHS OF UP CANDIDATES, WILL BE CONTESTED IN BY-ELECTIONS IN JUNE.) WHILE PROG VICTORIES ADDED TOUCH OF EXCITMENT TO ELECTION, OF MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANCE IS STRONG MANDATE RECEIVED BY NATIONAL PARTY AND ITS LEADER, PRIME MINISTER B.J. VORSTER. WAY NOW OPEN FOR HIM TO MOVE SAG ALONG PATH OF MORE POSITIVE ACHIEVEMENTS IN FIELD OF RACE RELATIONS. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF HE IS SO INCLINED. END SUMMARY.

2. RESULTS OF APRIL 24 GENERAL ELECTION INDICATE THAT UNITED PARTY (UP) SUPPORTERS, DISENCHANTED BY PARTY'S INTERNAL FEUDING AND PORR LEADERSHIP, DESERTED UP. SOME TURNED TO NATIONALISTS, AND OTHERS, ESPECIALLY IN URBAN AREAS, TO PROGRESSIVES. A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER APPARENTLY SIMPLY DID NOT VOTE. NEITHER CONSERVATIVE NOR REFORMIST WING OF UP CAN TAKE MUCH COMFORT FROM ELECTION RESULTS, AS CONSERVATIVE AND LIBERAL UP CANDIDATES ALIKE FARED RELATIVELY POORLY AT HANDS OF VOTERS. REFORMIST HARRY SCHWARZ, TRANSVAAL'S UP LEADER, DELIVERED ONLY NINE SEATS IN TRANSVAAL, AND "OLD GUARD" LEADER OF UP IN CAPE, MYBURGH STREICHER HAD HIS MAJORITY CUT FROM 4003 VOTES TO 1061. MANY OF THOSE UP CANDIDATES WHO DID NOT LOSE OUTRIGHT WERE RETURNED WITH DIMINISHED MAJORITIES. AS A CONSEQUENCE, DISUNITY IN PARTY COULD WELL BE EXACERBATED, WITH CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS BLAMING EACH OTHER FOR PARTY'S POOR SHOWING.

3. UPSURGE IN VOTER SUPPORT FOR PROGRESSIVES CANNOT BE ATTRIBUTED SOLELY TO UP'S MUDDLING. ALSO ACCOUNTING FOR PROG GAINS ARE HARD WORK, EXCELLENT ORGANIZATION, LOTS OF MONEY FROM WEALTHY BACKERS AND POSSIBLY A SLIGHT INCREASE IN NUMBER OF WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS WHO FAVOR CLEAR-CUT APPROACH TO RACE RELATIONS. IN TWO CASES (HELEN SUZMAN AND PROFESSOR VAN ZYL SLABBERT) PERSONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

MAGNETISM OF PROG CANDIDATE WAS ALSO FACTOR. AND IN ONE CONSTITUENCY, UNPOPULARITY OF UP'S CANDIDATE (ETIENNE MALAN) IN HIS OWN PARTY CONTRIBUTED MIGHTILY TO PROGRESSIVES' VICTORY.

4. WHILE IT TOO SOON TO BE SURE, OBSERVERS HERE ALREADY ARE VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS IN CONCLUDING THAT ELECTION RESULTS HERALD A RESTRUCTURING OF POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO NATIONAL PARTY (NP). EXPECTATION IS THAT DESPITE FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST SUCH A

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UNION, PROGS AND UP REFORMISTS WILL, IN TIME, JOIN TOGETHER, TAKING MOST OF MIDDLE-OF-ROAD UP MEMBERS OF PARLIMANET WITH THEM AND LEAVING CONSERVATIVES TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES OR TO FIND HAVEN WITH SOUL MATES IN NP. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHETHER REALIGNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL PARTIES ON CLEARLY DEMARCATED LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE LINES DOES INDEED TAKE PLACE, AS PM VORSTER, AMONG OTHERS, HAS PREDICTED. SUCH A DEVELOPMENT MIGHT HAVE SOME INDIRECT BEARING ON POLICIES OF RULING NP, BUT PROBABLY NOT MUCH. LONG-TERM SIGNIFICANCE OF REGROUPING WOULD BE LEFT FOR FUTURE TO REVEAL.

5. SIDELIGHTS OF ELECTION WERE INDIFFERENT SHOWING OF FORMER NP CABINET MINISTER THEO GERDENER'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY, AND FAILURE BY EXTREME RIGHT-WING HERSTIGTE NASIONALE PARTY (HNP) TO GAIN ANY GROUND ON NP OR TO WIN ANY SEATS. DEMOCRATS DID NOT REGISTER VICTORY IN ANY OF SEVEN CONSTITUENCIES THEY CONTESTED, AND GERDENER HIMSELF NARROWLY LOST HIS BID TO RETURN TO PARLIAMENT. LIBERALLY-ORIENTED DEMOCRATS LOST THEIR DEPOSITS IN THREE CONSTITUENCIES. THEY DID FAIRLY WELL IN THREE RACES BUT THIS PROBABLY WAS DUE MORE TO DEFECTION FROM UP THEN TO INTRINSIC APPEAL OF DEMOCRATIC PARTY ITSELF. HNP DID ABOUT THE SAME AS IT DID IN 1970. MOST OF ITS CANDIDATES LOST THEIR DEPOSITS. IT APPEARS THAT HNP'S PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL VOTES WILL COMPARE CLOSELY TO 3.6 PERCENT IT RECEIVED IN 1970. THUS ONCE MORE, VORSTER'S GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES HAVE NOT RESULTED IN ANY LARGE-SCALE DESERTION BY AFRIKANERS TO SIDE OF LUNATIC-FRINGE RACISTS. HNP, HOWEVER, LIKELY TO MAINTAIN ITS ROLE AS MINOR PARTY.

6. INTERESTING THOUGH THEY MAY BE, PLIGHT OF UP, PROGRESS OF PROGS AND INEFFECTUALITY OF SMALLER PARTIES ARE PERIPHERAL TO MAIN MESSAGE OF ELECTION WHICH IS THAT NATIONALISTS HAVE WON ANOTHER SOLID VICTORY. SWING TO UP THAT BEGAN IN 1966 DEFINITELY HAS ENDED FOR NOW AT VERY LEAST. MAJORITY OF WHITDAVOTERS
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CONTINUE TO REGARD NATIONAL PARTY AND ITS POLICIES
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